

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

1. MACAQUE MONKEY EATING MUSHROOMS

The macaque monkey, *Macaca mulatta* (Zimmerman), is common in the New Forest estate of the Forest Research Institute near Dehra Dun (Uttar Pradesh), ca. 600 metres above sea-level. It moves about the estate in small troops, doing depredation to gardens and cultivation. During the summer monsoon, mushrooms spring up profusely from the ground all over the area. They usually acquire a whitish umbrella-shaped body which attains a height of upto 4 cm.

One day in August, 1955, I saw a large male macaque pulling out and eating these mushrooms with relish. A few days later another male was observed repeating the same performance. The observation seems to be worth recording. As several species of mushrooms grow in Dehra Dun, I am unable to say which species the monkeys were eating.

ZOOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA,
CALCUTTA,
September 24, 1956.

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2. LION V. TIGER

Col. Kesri Singh's interesting Miscellaneous Note entitled 'Experiments in Implanting African Lions into Madhya Bharat', in Vol. 53, pp. 465-68 of this journal, gives the details of how lions were imported from Africa into Gwalior in 1916. This information is most welcome, especially as we are now concerned with the proposal of moving a few lions from the Gir Forest into some other parts of India. (See my paper entitled 'The Management of India's Wild Life Sanctuaries and National Parks' in this issue of the *Journal*, pp. 1-21.)

An interesting point was raised, also, in the details concerning lions versus tigers in combat. Col. Kesri Singh is of the opinion that the lion was ousted from its habitat in India by the tiger, but this is not confirmed by some naturalists. R. I. Pocock, for example, in his *Fauna of British India, Mammalia*, Vol. I, pp. 220-221 gives emphasis to the slaughter of lions in India by sportsmen and others, particularly by British army officers during the nineteenth century. This shooting out of lions, he maintains, was the real cause of their disappearance in India, while the more wary tiger managed to survive.

In support of this theory, Pocock points out that lions have also disappeared from parts of Europe, SW. Asia and Africa, where there were no tigers to interfere with them. I am indebted to the Jam Sahib of Nawanagar for the information that in many parts of NW. India, where the lion has disappeared, there were never any tigers to contribute to this.

Pocock goes even further by suggesting that the lion entered India from the NW. and was able to spread as far south as the Narbada River in spite of the previous occupation of many of these parts by the tiger, which (according to him) had probably entered India previously from the NE. to spread down to the tip of the peninsula.

Pocock also is of the opinion that even if a lion and tiger did exist in the same region, their difference of habit and habitat would not necessarily bring them into actual conflict with each other, and that an encounter would just as likely end in mutual avoidance as in a fight, and in the event of a fight the lion's chance of success, so far as anything is known to the contrary, would be as good as the tiger's. Hence there does not appear to be a particle of evidence that the tiger played even a subordinate part in the extermination of the lion in India.

Now for the fate of some of the African lions when released into Gwalior forests. Col. Kesri Singh has explained how these three pairs of lions were confined in a 20 ft. stone wall enclosure 'for about 4 years' before being released. Col. Kesri Singh has very kindly informed me in a letter that the size of this enclosure was only 'about 100 ft. square'. This must surely have been a very severe handicap to the lions—to be thus confined for four years and then released straight into tiger country. Imagine a few tigers confined for four years in a similar enclosure in the Gir Forest and then released to fight the Gir lions on their 'home ground'!

Col. Kesri Singh refers to three duels arranged by him between tigers and lions, in which the tigers won on each occasion. In this connection it is interesting to note that the Jam Sahib of Nawanagar has informed me that he has himself witnessed a fight between a lion and a tiger on four occasions, on all of which the lion won.

My own humble opinion is that I do not think much importance should be attached to whether the lion or the tiger was victorious in any particular duel *unless the two animals were equally matched in every respect*. In other words both tiger and lion would have to be the same sex, same age, same weight (relatively), same condition, same duration of captivity, same length of time since last feeding and drinking, etc., etc. The combat would also have to be arranged under such conditions and circumstances that neither animal had any unfair advantage over the other. To organise such a combat would be extremely difficult—in fact almost impossible.

There is also another aspect to be considered. It has been the practice of many makers of nature films, especially of the Hollywood and more recent T.V. Schools, to present only the sensational. Their animal films include staged fights between captive animals unnaturally forced to fight each other, and ferocious charges by deliberately provoked animals, simply to pamper audiences which are ignorant of real jungle conditions and which have become accustomed to a series of excitements and thrills in nature films. This is most unfortunate, since not only are such films an unreal portrayal of wild life, but also when a serious field naturalist produces a genuine wild life film of what he has actually seen, it is likely to appear flat and uninteresting after those made by the 'animal fight' school.

Having seen African lions in East Africa and Indian lions in the Gir Forest, I have immense respect for these creatures. And having seen tigers in various parts of India, I have the highest admiration for these. Both animals in their own different ways and in their own different habitats are equally worthy of our admiration. I would rather think of them as mutually respecting and avoiding each other if they happened to meet in the wild state.

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August 20, 1956.

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3. TRANSFERRING OF THE INDIAN LION TO AN ADDITIONAL LOCALITY

There has been much thought given recently to the moving of lions from the Gir Forest to other parts of their former range. The idea no doubt is to insure the future of this noble animal from possible extinction by man or through epidemic diseases or other natural catastrophies, and as such is to be welcomed. Is there however, any need to do this at all?

In the Gir Forest the lions live out in the surrounding cultivation and less in the forest itself, except in the eastern part of the reserve. Lions are animals of the open country and do not like forests. That they are found in the Gir is no doubt owing to the broken nature of the terrain which allowed the last of the animals' shelter from the shikaris who wiped them out over the rest of the country, and possibly also due to the great numbers of cattle grazed in the forest, providing them with a plenty of food. In former times the lions ranging across the north-west of India must have fed on nilgai and buck which were found in plenty in the areas frequented by the lions. Now where is there a place where these antelopes can be found in the concentrated numbers sufficient to support a pride of lions? As in the case of tiger, cattle are a substitute in place of the lion's natural food, while other forest game such as cheetal can never form the sole diet of the lion. Bearing this in mind, would it be fair to impose economic loss on people living around the proposed new lion sanctuary, and has the danger to these people who are not familiar with the lion and his ways been considered? Finally, what will prevent the lions from wandering away as they apparently did when some were introduced by the Maharaja of Gwalior in his forests several decades ago? These are questions which cannot be lightly dismissed. Another problem which needs to be looked into before trapping of the lions commences is that of housing them while the full family is being caught, and till they are moved to their new home. It is obvious that the present accommodation in the Junagadh Zoo is limited